TOWN OF ACTON

SEWER ACTION COMMITTEE November 18, 2008 Senior Center

Members: Ann Chang, Don Barron, Rick Gordon, Andy Munro, Kanayo Lala, Helen Probst, and Nancy

Tavernier. Staff support: Doug Halley. Guests: Aidan Smith, Michael Kreuze

Absent: Ron Beck, Kent Sharp

I. Call to order

Doug Halley called the meeting to order and reviewed the BOS charge to the committee, Open Meeting Law requirements, and Conflict of Interest cautions. No email discussions are to take place among individual committee members, emails should be sent to Doug who will distribute them to the committee. Members introduced themselves and were reminded to get sworn in at the Town Clerk's office.

II. Election of officers

Doug entertained nominations for chairman and clerk. Andy Munro and Helen Probst were nominated to be Co-Chairs of the committee and Nancy Tavernier was nominated to be Clerk. Members voted unanimously for the officers. Andy and Helen took over the running of the meeting.

III. Low Pressure Sewer Design for the Spencer/Tuttle/Flint area.

Woodard and Curran presented a proposal in August to investigate a low pressure sewer option for the neighborhood with an apples-to-apples comparison with the previous conventional sewer design and cost estimate. The estimated budget is a fixed price of \$24,500. This will include 2 days of soil borings at a cost of \$6200.

Members reviewed the proposal and suggested ideas for lowering the overall cost of a low pressure system. Options for lowering the cost: 1. a taxpayer contribution rather than 100% user funding, 2. sharing of grinder pumps between abutting properties. Costs needs to be compared line by line with the previous estimate to see such things as the share of the treatment plant and capacity costs that would be allocated to the new expansion district. The I/A subcommittee of the WRAC is still in existence and had proposed a meeting with E-One to get an estimate from them of a low pressure system using the W&C design.

IV. Funding the Woodard and Curran proposal

Doug confirmed the town's capital list of FY'10 includes the sewer expansion costs but cautioned that due to cutbacks in the current budget and the next, that there may be no capital articles presented to town meeting in April and those that are proposed will be in stiff competition with public safety needs and other more critical capital needs. This is a very bleak outlook for even expenditure as small as the W&C proposal.

Andy's wife met recently with Sen. Resor who has spoken to the Governor about Acton's sewer problems. He has stated a commitment to solving Acton's problems and helping us obtain a 0% interest loan. Andy also mentioned the possibility of a grant that would be available to assist in job creation which the sewer expansion might qualify for.

SAC will need to convince the voters to support the funding request at town meeting. The arguments this time will be different. The major argument for the expansion should be economic development rather than the public health issue of the first sewer district. West Acton center has such great potential for economic development but will never realize it without a waste water solution. OMR is planning a reconfiguration with their properties at the corner of Mass. Ave. and Spruce St. This will include a theater. They are currently planning for a septic system that will cost 100's of 1,000's of dollars. West Acton Center would be revitalized if there were a sewer solution, with small restaurants and cafes, a greater variety of retail services, and apartments over stores. The West Acton Village Plan envisioned such revitalization with sewers. There may be savings possible by refining the Flint neighborhood needs, eliminating areas that are geographically different from those with septic challenges. The West Acton village area needs to be refined for maximum viability and needs which would include crossing the tracks to pick up the commercial areas west of the tracks and down Arlington St. to Spruce.

The voting blocs need to be identified so we can build support. 1. The people and businesses in the proposed expanded district. 2. The current users should be motivated since an expansion would help lower their O&M costs. Their betterment would not be lowered though, state law prevents that. 3. The general taxpayer who would recognize the value of economic development and additional tax revenues. Enhancement of our village areas was a key priority in the recent town wide visioning survey.

The Spencer/Flint study also needs to be refined to include only the needlest areas. The committee feels both the neighborhood and West Acton Center need to have a design estimate prepared. The total cost could be \$40,000. The funding challenge is the biggest hurdle to getting this underway. Not only will this request be in stiff competition for limited dollars but at the same time septic system installation costs are escalating. First the BOS and then the FinCom need to be convinced of the need for this study.

V. Action Items

Doug will talk to Woodard and Curran to have them re-formulate their proposal to include West Acton Center and also refine the neighborhood area and also the cost of each study individually. A new quote should be ready for the next meeting.

Don will check with Eric Hilfer to see if there are plans to bring in E-One for a future SAC meeting.

VI. Meeting schedule

The committee decided to set the second Tuesday of each month for a regular meeting date. The next meeting will be December 9. Doug will find a room.

The agenda will include: new quote from W&C, revised design scope, grants and loans information, a plan to start the "buy-in" process.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20PM

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Tavernier Clerk

TOWN OF ACTON

SEWER ACTION COMMITTEE December 9, 2008 Senior Center



Members: Don Barron, Rick Gordon, Andy Munro, Kanayo Lalo, Helen Probst, Kent Sharp, Ron Beck, and Nancy Tavernier. Staff support: Doug Halley. Guests: Henry Albro, Wayne Friedrichs

I. Call to order

Andy Munro called the meeting to order at 7:10PM and moved immediately to a presentation by Henry Albro of F. R. Mahony & Assoc. on low pressure sewers.

II. Low Pressure Sewer Analysis, Henry Albro

Albro presented information on the analysis he did using low pressure sewers for the Spencer/Flint/Tuttle area and West Acton Center east of the tracks, as an apples-to-apples comparison of the Woodard & Curran cost estimate for a gravity system in the same areas. Two lift stations in West Acton and 1 at Flint/Tuttle would be eliminated to help with a total net savings of \$1.658M based on the \$11M estimate of the whole system from Woodard & Curran.

Albro explained the advantages of low pressure over gravity: lower maintenance cost, smaller pipes, shallower installation, less disruption to groundwater and utilities, lower O&M costs, allows for flexible flows, good for single family or small commercial uses, not good for high flow uses, and directional drilling can be used. System can be easily expanded for higher uses such as restaurants by adding pumps. Commercial areas in Wayland and Fitchburg, and town buildings in Westford are using low pressure systems currently as well as the town of Shirley. Westford's effluent discharges to a package plant at the nearby school.

Members suggested the area in West Acton needs to be redefined to delete Spruce St. and the schools and add the commercial areas on the west side of the tracks on Mass. Ave, Central and Arlington St. That will be done at a future meeting.

Questions: Can homes share a pump to reduce cost? Yes but not advisable due to the need for a condo document. Can pumps be owned by town? Yes. Some towns maintain the pumps such as Marion. There are 30,000 pumps operating in the North East and only 4-5 technicians are needed to service them all. It is possible state tax credits could be used for the purchase of the pumps by homeowners. Can the low pressure pipes tie into the gravity system via a force main? Yes, it is actually good for the gravity system to have a steady flow, cleaning out the pipes along the way. How much would a package plant cost? For 100kgpd the cost would be \$2.1M. The existing plant would be a better deal. What is the history of low pressure, the oldest known system? Utah system built in 1979, still going strong. If a pump fails, it likely only needs a new core which is \$1400. The pump costs \$3900 without a bulk order discount. Can the low pressure system be built in phases? Yes, you can start at the upper end and tie in people as you go along. The streets only hold the pipes and clean out manholes, no deep digging needed. There are options for indoor pumps rather than outdoor ones.

The construction cost <u>only</u> estimate presented for West Acton (WAC-1 east of tracks) for 89 connections was \$1,359,921, grand total per connection \$15,280. For Spencer/Tuttle/Flint the total construction cost would be \$2,159,056 for 142 connections or \$15,204 per connection. This is a combined savings of \$1,658,695 over Woodard & Curran's gravity system estimates. These costs do NOT include design and engineering and many other costs required for municipal construction.

Environment/One (Albro's parent company) works with Woodard & Curran not in competition with them. They sell the pumps, they do not design or engineer sewer systems. The Committee was very impressed with the information presented and the full hard copies of details to document the analysis.

III. Review of Woodard & Curran's revised proposal

Woodard and Curran presented a revised proposal to investigate a low pressure sewer option for the neighborhood and newly defined West Acton with an apples-to-apples comparison with the previous conventional sewer design and cost estimate. The estimated budget is a fixed price of \$29,500. This will include 2 days of soil borings at a cost of \$6200. Phase 1 will be just the Spencer/Flint/Tuttle area where they will look on a street by street basis to get the breakdown of cost by street. Then they will go to phase 2 in West Acton. The obvious concern is how to pay for this especially with the threat of state and local budget cuts. It was suggested that money from a WR Grace environmental account be explored. Doug will look into this.

It is possible a federal economic stimulus package will include funds for capital projects in MA. This would not cover a study but does make it more hopeful for sewer construction funding. Members concluded that we need to spend the \$30,000 to know what the cost of the project would be so that the users could judge for themselves to pursue it. A vote at town meeting for this funding would be the first test. It is felt that a betterment as high as \$60,000 would not be acceptable, people might support \$25,000. With the additional commercial properties in West Acton, there would be more business users who pay a higher betterment based on maximum potential use. This would lower the residential betterment.

It was <u>moved</u>, <u>seconded</u>, and <u>voted</u> that the Sewer Action Committee request the Board of Selectmen fund the Woodard & Curran design basis study for \$29,500 in the FY2010 budget or sooner if possible. Before the request goes to town meeting, we would need a lot more financial information. Vote was 7 Yes and 1 abstention (Ron Beck).

IV. West Acton discussion

Members reviewed maps of the West Acton Center area and agreed that areas that have a history of failures, or aging systems as well as areas that have strong business interest and economic development potential should be used as criteria for the better definition of the West Acton study area. Wayne Friedrichs expressed his concern about 40B's.

V. Status of State SRF program

Doug provided the table showing that Acton is listed as a new project and rated at 120 points for a Sewer Expansion that would access the State Revolving Funds for a project cost of \$4,650,000. This is very positive news so early in the process.

VI. Minutes of 11/16/08 were approved as written.

VI. Meeting schedule

The next meeting will be January 6, 2009. Doug will find a room.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20PM

Respectfully submitted, Nancy Tavernier, Clerk

TOWN OF ACTON

January 6, 2008 Senior Center

Members: Don Barron, Andy Munro, Helen Probst, Kent Sharp, Ron Beck, Ann Chang, Bob Johnson and Nancy Tavernier. Staff support: Doug Halley. Guests: Terra Friedrichs, Wayne Friedrichs, Arnold Levy, Mike Kreuze, Gloria Jacobs, Kerry Byrne, Aidan Smith

Call to order

Andy Munro called the meeting to order at 7:10PM.

II. Minutes of 12/9/08 were approved as amended.

III. Status of Low Pressure Sewer Study

Doug reported that DPW Director Bruce Stamski has taken on the task of doing the Low Pressure Sewer study for the Flint/Tuttle/Spencer neighborhood in-house. Bruce has experience with designing such systems in his previous job, he is a civil engineer. He will use existing data from the Water District and other engineering information available at Town Hall. Borings should not be required. The study is going along quickly as work allows and should be finished in a few more weeks. Members were very pleased with this cost effective study. The scope of the study is for Bruce to do a preliminary design of the neighborhood and do a cost analysis of each street. West Acton will be studied using a gravity design after the committee analyzes the F/T/S info and determines the boundaries of a West Acton Center system once the flow is determined for F/T/S. There is a difference of opinion on whether a low pressure system would work in a commercial area, a gravity system will be the focus of Bruce's study.

Questions were raised about sharing the information with Woodard and Curran and their relationship with DEP. It was pointed out that the Town also has a good relationship with DEP and Woodard and Curran and there should not be a problem.

Wayne Friedrichs expressed concerns that the SAC seemed to be assuming sewers were the solutions for the neighborhood and wanted to know why it seemed to be a fait accompli. Members of the committee referred him to the Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan (CWRMP) report on the Health Department website to learn how these two areas came to be the highest priorities for wastewater solutions that focus on sewers. The purpose of the Sewer Action Committee is appended to these minutes as a reminder to the members.

IV. Emails from F/T/S neighborhood

Members reviewed 4 emails from property owners in the F/T/S neighborhood, three in support of sewers and one opposed. As requested by Selectman Berry, a response will be sent to Doug Edwards by Helen that would explain the purpose of the committee is to find an affordable sewer solution which has the advantage of being a permanent solution versus a septic system that is not permanent, especially one in a high ground water area. Residents attending the meeting stressed how problematic the high water table is in the area and how it has been steadily rising over the past 10 years. Water usage is very restricted in many homes. If the water could be removed from the neighborhood, it might help solve the problem. Doug explained that federal regulations now prohibit such solutions as draining ground water into swamps and carrying it away. Recharge is the main thrust of drainage solutions now and that will do nothing for the neighborhood in this situation because the swamp is full of water and cannot take on any more. The town studied a home at 3 Spencer over the winter of 2003 and could find no specific reason for the rising groundwater but that problem has now been solved. Doug thinks the dramatic increase in the beaver population is perhaps the key cause of the problem. Beaver dams can only be removed if they threaten public health and high ground water does not seem to meet that criteria.

In order to quantify the current problems in the neighborhood, Ron Beck offered to update the records over the past 5 years at the BOH.

Helen will respond to Edwards to include SAC's purpose, the permanency of sewers as a solution, and suggest that drainage concerns should be addressed at the Engineering Department.

V. State and Federal Funding Sources

Information on the possible Federal Stimulus package and how it can be used was handed out and discussed. Project have to be shovel ready in 180 days, it is unlikely that a sewer expansion could meet that schedule but Woodard and Curran will file a proposal for sewer expansion to F/T/S and WA with the State just to get our project on the radar screen. Details of the program are unknown since the stimulus program has not even been before Congress yet. The town is going to apply for a solar array for the treatment plant.

VI. Community Involvement

Andy proposed that members should send letters to our elected representative, federal and state, to plead for help with making sewers more affordable. Andy has 80 contacts in the neighborhood and Rick Gordon has a list of West Acton business owners. Andy will send out letter writing pitches to the committee and beyond, suggesting people write letters to push for the stimulus money. Kent suggested that we may need to have a placeholder on the town meeting warrant to cover any required appropriations for the stimulus package.

When we get more definitive design information at the next meeting, depending on the cost information, we can then start an education program to update the community about our efforts. We could also prepare handouts for town meeting as an education tool.

VII. Round Table

Action items for future meetings and suggestions for member action were listed.

- Committee members should get individually familiar with the Flint/Tuttle/Spencer neighborhood by driving through it and noting the terrain, the cullde sacs and the high water.
- At the next meeting, we need to begin to define the West Acton Center area with an eye to maximizing
 economic development, capturing all the commercial areas.

VII. Meeting schedule

The next meeting will be February 3, 2009. Doug will find a room.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30PM

Respectfully submitted, Nancy Tavernier, Clerk

Sewer Action Advisory Committee

Flint/Tuttle/Spencer-West Acton -

In a report dated September 8, 2008, the Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) recommended that the Board of Selectmen/Sewer Commissioners consider the creation of a Sewer Action Committee for the purpose of further exploring the viability of introducing sewers to the Spencer/Tuttle/Flint Road neighborhood and/or the West Acton Village. The Flint/Tuttle/Spencer-West Acton Sewer Action Advisory Committee described herein is being established by the Board of Selectmen in response to the recommendations of WRAC and in response to petition requests for such consideration from citizens and business owners of these neighborhoods.

The purpose of the Sewer Action Advisory Committee is to examine the financial feasibility of sewering the Spencer/Tuttle/Flint neighborhood and/or the West Acton Village, and to recommend to the Board of Selectmen any future Town Meeting actions in this regard. For the purpose of this investigation, sewering may be deemed to include an extension of the Fort Pond Brook Sewer District and/or the creation of a separate sewer infrastructure and district.

The membership of the Committee is not fixed, but may include the following:

- Two individuals representing the Flint/Tuttle/Spencer Road neighborhood
- Two individuals representing the West Acton Village neighborhood, one preferably from the business community
- One member representing the existing Middle Fort Pond Brook Sewer District
- One member representing the Acton Public School District
- One member representing the Town of Acton Finance Committee,
- One member representing the broader Acton citizenry, and
- Other members deemed appropriate by the Committee and as approved by the Board of Selectmen

While the schedule for action by the Sewer Action Advisory Committee will be determined by the Committee, it is anticipated that the Committee will conduct a General Public Meeting by the end of the 2008 calendar year, and shall report its findings to the Selectmen on a schedule that anticipates a formal presentation to Annual Town Meeting in the Spring of 2009.

October 31, 2008